

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Jessees Mill

other names/site number 083-5152-0001

**2. Location**

street & number State Rt. 645, 2.5 mi. north of Rt. 71

not for publication N/A

city or town Cleveland

vicinity X

state Virginia code VA county Russell code 167

Zip 24

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this      nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally      statewide X locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Virginia Department of Historic Resources**

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register criteria. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

     entered in the National Register

     See continuation sheet.

     determined eligible for the  
National Register

Date of Action

     See continuation sheet.

     determined not eligible for the National Register

     removed from the National Register

     other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Keeper



U. S. Department of the Interior  
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Russell County, Virginia**7. Description****Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

\_\_\_\_\_ no style \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)foundation stoneroof metalwalls wood

other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)**8. Statement of Significance****Applicable National Register Criteria** (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)Architecture \_\_\_\_\_Industry \_\_\_\_\_Engineering \_\_\_\_\_**Period of Significance** ca. 1851-1932 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Significant Dates 1897  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

\_\_\_\_\_ n/a \_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_ n/a \_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder \_\_\_\_\_ unknown \_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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### 9. Major Bibliographical References

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#### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS)

\_\_\_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

\_\_\_ previously listed in the National Register

\_\_\_ previously determined eligible by the National Register

\_\_\_ designated a National Historic Landmark

\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

#### Primary Location of Additional Data

X State Historic Preservation Office

\_\_\_ Other State agency

\_\_\_ Federal agency

\_\_\_ Local government

\_\_\_ University

\_\_\_ Other

Name of repository: VA Department of Historic Resources

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### 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property approx. 1 acre.

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing

Zone Easting Northing

1 17 395969 4085943 2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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Russell County, Virginia

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title: Michael J. Pulice and John R. Kern, Roanoke Regional Office

Organization: Virginia Department of Historic Resources date July 27, 2004

street & number: 1030 Penmar Ave SE telephone 540-857-7586

city or town Roanoke state VA zip code 24013

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Sherman Wallace, Jr.

street & number Rt. 1 Box 18 telephone 276-889-2865

city or town Cleveland state VA zip code 24225

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Summary Description

Jessees Mill is sited beside a waterfall on Mill Creek, nestled deep in the Clinch River Valley of rural, mountainous Russell County. It began ca. 1851 as a single pen log structure in which grain was processed using water power and the traditional millstones. The mill was greatly enlarged c. 1897 by a 2-story balloon frame addition built on top of the old log structure, which accommodated an extensive array of new roller mill equipment. The old millstones, the swing hoist, wooden crown wheel and articulated pinions, wooden gears, belt wheels, and other working parts were left in place at the bottom level, and may have continued in use for a period of time. Astonishingly, nearly all of the roller equipment on the upper floors also survives in situ, and in generally good condition. Associated with the mill is a well-preserved timber frame barn that appears to be contemporaneous with the mill's frame addition. Although the millpond does not survive, the mill's historic setting is virtually undisturbed. The exceptionally well-built stone dam, believed to date to the early (ca. 1851) period, survives well intact.

The nominated parcel lies just northwest of the intersection of county roads 645 and 640, on the west bank of Mill Creek, less than 2 miles south of Mill Creek's confluence with the Clinch River. The parcel includes the mill building, the dam, constructed of stone, and a ca. 1900 frame barn situated just north of the mill. The dam is located on Mill Creek, and can be seen from Rt. 645. These resources are held by a single owner.

Associated Resources

The large, brick, c. 1897 Andrew Jackson Jessee House, associated with the mill, is situated on the east side of Route 645, across the road from the mill. The house is notable for its scale, its Queen Anne style characteristics and unusual rusticated brick window arches, as well as its high level of integrity. A late 19th C. frame miller's cottage is sited north of the A.J. Jessee House, also on Rt. 645. The frame Mill Creek Church (mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century) lies just to the southwest of the intersection of Rts. 645 & 640, cater-corner from the one-room frame Jessees Mill schoolhouse, which appears to date to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These resources are currently held by other owners, and therefore *are not being nominated at this time*.

Architectural Description

The earliest part of the mill is a weatherboarded two-story, one-room structure of massive hardwood logs, hand hewn on two sides and V-notched at the corners, set upon an embanked foundation of

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dry-laid, roughly cut and uncut stone. The entire log structure now comprises the basement of the existing mill building. It was rectangular in plan, measuring 18 ft. by 30ft., and was proportionally quite tall in its original form, with at least two stories and an attic space. It had window openings on the first and second levels on the north and south elevations, but none on the east elevation. Early-period sawn weatherboards, untapered and irregular in both length and width, survive only on the east elevation. The other two sides have c.1897 un-beaded yellow-poplar weatherboards that match the upper floors of the enlarged structure. Many are fastened with cut nails, some with wire nails. Centered on the east elevation, the 20-foot, all steel Fitz overshot water wheel, which likely replaced an original iron and wood wheel, is now rusted and mired in alluvium. The main power shaft protrudes from the wall just above the sill log, about 8 ft. above present ground surface. On the interior, there is no floor at the sill level because the entire space is occupied by the main shaft and gears, all supported by the massive heavy timber *hurst frame*. The hurst frame is entirely independent of the building in order to minimize vibrations. Satellite gears once drove the pair of millstones and later were connected to belt wheels that powered the roller equipment in the upper levels. The spur wheel and other wheels are made of oak laid cross-grained for double strength, and pegged with dowels. The cogs were also hand-chiseled from oak.

“The working parts of an old mill, with hand-hewn cogs and rough wooden flumes, look simple but represent the first practical use of many engineering principles. In order to get more power, they varied the width and diameter of the wheel to suit their water supply. A large, narrow wheel would suit a small stream with a high fall. Over time, wheel paddles were replaced with buckets that held water through part of the wheel’s turn. Overshot wheels carried the weight of the water longer than other types of wheels, through a third of its revolution. John Smeaton’s experiments in the 18<sup>th</sup> century explored and explained the hydraulics of milling so that dams and sluices could be precisely engineered.” Tyrwhitt et al., 36.

Like many other gristmills of the period, Jessees Mill is now four stories tall in order for the milling process to use gravity to full advantage. The c.1897 section of the mill added several times to the building’s mass. It consists of a light balloon frame with heavy corner posts and diagonal bracing. On the medium-pitch gable roof, V-crimped sheet metal panels have replaced 19<sup>th</sup> C. pressed tin shingles, a few of which can still be found about the mill. The windows, several of which are missing, were primarily 6-over-6 double hung sash with fine muntins.

After 1897, the mill was entered mainly by a doorway at the second floor level, on the uphill (west) side of the building. Just to the right of the doorway once stood a chimney with an

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exceptionally tall stack, needed to clear the roof. Its shape and dimensions are clearly indicated by differential weathering on the weatherboards. The chimney was constructed of handmade bricks and lime/sand mortar, and served only one hearth, in the small southwest-corner office on the second floor. Fireplaces are said to have been rare in mills because of explosive fine powder atmospheres.

The second floor and third floors house the corn cleaner, wheat cleaner and flour grader or bolter, together with the complex system of bins, hoppers, troughs, shafts, belts, pulleys, and chains powering them via a long belt from the main shaft in the basement. These devices are boldly stenciled with "Improved Dawson Roller, Manufactured by Salem Machine Works, Salem, VA" and "Patented March 3, 1889 [and] December 10, 1889."

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Summary and Justification of Criteria**

Jessees Mill is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Industry because of the its importance to the survival of the local community from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, by providing an efficient way of processing grain crops for subsistence and local wholesale distribution. The mill is also locally significant under criterion A in the area of Engineering because the material technology employed during two distinct periods of construction and milling processes is still extant on site and within the mill structure. Each of the three contributing structures are eligible under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for their inherent quality of design and craftsmanship. The property as a whole offers exceptional potential for study and interpretation in a region where very few such resources have been preserved. The period of significance extends from the mill's construction date of ca. 1850, through 1932, when the mill ceased to operate.

**Historical Background**

Jessee family history and land record research substantiate the account of Jessees Mill prepared by Emory Hamilton in 1973. Hamilton asserted that the Jessee Mill was enlarged between 1889 and 1900 by Andrew Jackson "Jack" Jessee on Mill Creek 6 miles southwest of the Russell County Courthouse in Lebanon. Hamilton added that there had been a gristmill near the site of the roller mill for about 50 years prior to construction of the roller mill.

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Research based on the Jessee Mill Historic Foundation historic marker application (2002) indicated that John Jessee Sr. owned a mill in Reeds Valley by 1801. John Kern's research for this nomination suggests, however, that John Jessee Sr. probably did not own a mill at the time of his death in 1815. Land book research demonstrates that no buildings were on the land Archer Jessee acquired from the estate of his father John Jessee Sr. in the 1820s. Further Russell County Land Book and manuscript census research provides evidence that Archer Jessee operated a mill in Reeds Valley by the 1850s and that Andrew Jackson Jessee acquired the mill property from the estate of his father, Archer Jessee, in 1861. Kern's research supports the assertion by Emory Hamilton in *Old Mills of Far Southwest Virginia* (1973) that Andrew Jackson Jessee built the Roller Process Jessee Mill on Mill Creek between 1889 and 1900. The (roller process) Jessee Mill constructed between 1889 and 1900 is the subject of the present nomination, though it is evident that a gristmill begun by Archer Jessee in the 1850s was incorporated into the ca. 1890 structure.

Jessee family history presented in the bicentennial *Heritage of Russell County, Virginia, 1786–1986*, identifies John Jessee Sr. as the grandfather of Andrew Jackson Jessee and the first of the Jessee family to settle in Russell County, Virginia. Born about 1742 in Devonshire, England, John Jessee Sr. moved to the American colonies, married Frances Lee, and settled in Caswell County, North Carolina, from 1778 to 1787. While in North Carolina, John Jessee Sr. served in the American Revolution as a musician in Yarborog's Regiment from 1781 to 1782. After the Revolution John Jessee Sr. moved to Russell County, Virginia, where he owned land by 1791. Fifteen children were born to John and Frances Jessee. Their second son, Archer Jessee, who owned a mill in Reeds Valley by the 1850s, also fathered fifteen children, nine by a first marriage to Mary Jane Hanson, four by a second marriage to Rachel Harrington, and the remainder by a third marriage to Mary J. Owens. Millwright Andrew Jackson "Jack" Jessee was the oldest son and second child of Archer Jessee's third marriage to Mary Owens. It was Andrew Jackson Jessee who built the roller process mill in the late 1800s on the Reeds Valley land inherited from his father in the 1860s.

John Jessee Sr. acquired land in Russell County as early as 1791. Russell County Deed Book I records that he received 200 acres from Thomas and Jane Price in return for payment of 100 £. By 1799 Russell County Land Books show that John Jessee Sr. owned a total of 250 acres in Russell County. Apparently he had built a mill on this property by 1801, because the Russell County Law Order Book for that year orders construction of a road "passing Capt. Brakleys [?] mill to John Jessee's Mill." Jessees mill mentioned in the law order book in 1801 may not have been in place a decade and half later because the Russell County Law Order Book for 1814 grants John Jessee permission "to build a mill and make an abutment at the place by him proposed." It

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seems unlikely that John Jessee would have requested permission to build a new mill in 1814 if his mill recorded in 1801 was still in operation. In any event, the inventory of his estate recorded at the time of his death in 1815 lists John Jessee Sr.'s possession of one Negro girl valued at \$325, one Negro boy valued at \$250, a set of Smith tools, a grindstone, four axes, a loom and two wheels, and 30 pounds of iron. The inventory, however, made no reference to John Jessee Sr. ownership of mill equipment.

Further evidence that no mill owned by John Jessee Sr. in 1801 is associated with the present Roller Process Jessee Mill comes from the fact that Russell County Land Books do not record any buildings on the lands acquired by Archer Jessee from his father John Jessee's estate in the 1820s. Archer Jessee acquired 50 acres of land from his father's estate by 1822 and an additional adjoining tract of 118 acres from his father's estate by 1828, but neither parcel contained any buildings at the dates of Archer Jessee's acquisition of the land. By 1823 Archer Jessee had added new buildings valued at \$100 on the 50-acre tract. Land Books continue to record Archer Jessee in possession of the two tracts with buildings valued at \$100 on the 50-acre tract and with no buildings on the 118-acre tract through 1839. The 1840s Land Books show Archer Jessee in possession of buildings valued at \$900 on the 50-acre tract, with still no buildings valued on the 118-acre tract. These valuations continue until 1851, when land books show no buildings on the 50-acre tract and buildings valued at \$800 on the 118-acre tract. In 1860 the manuscript census for population lists Archer Jessee as a farmer 83 years old in possession of real estate valued at \$5,000 and head of a household including third wife Polly [Mary] and son Andrew Jackson, age 21. The 1860 census also records George Kiser as a miller living adjacent to the Archer Jessee household. Since Kiser owned no real estate, it seems apparent that he operated a mill built by Archer Jessee on his 118-acre tract in 1851, the first year that land books recorded buildings on that tract.

Andrew Jackson Jessee inherited his father's land, including the mill, in 1861. Buildings on the 118-acre tract continued to be listed in Andrew Jackson's possession in the Russell County Land Books, though the building valuation had dropped to \$300 by 1857. Andrew Jackson Jessee's buildings are still listed on the same 118- or 117-acre tract from 1889 to 1895 with buildings then valued at \$1,300. In 1897 the Russell County Land Book recorded an additional \$700 for buildings, which thereby documents construction of the roller mill at the earlier mill site. Because Andrew Jackson Jessee owned no other land in the 1890s, it is safe to conclude that the Roller Process Jessee Mill was in place by 1897 and that the earlier gristmill on that property cannot have predated 1851.

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Emory Hamilton states that Andrew Jackson “Jack” Jessee operated the mill until his death in 1922. Andrew Jackson Jessee’s son Wiley E. Jackson continued to operate the mill until it closed in 1932.

The Jessee Mill Foundation, Inc., formed in 2001, seeks to commemorate the mill that once operated at the center of an active community with a general store, blacksmith shop, and school.

**Bibliography**

Evans, Oliver, *The Young Mill-Wright and Miller's Guide*, third reprint of the 1795 First Edition by THE OLIVER EVANS PRESS, Wallingford, Pennsylvania, 1999.

Hamilton, Emory, L. *Old Mills of Far Southwest Virginia*. Wise, Virginia; Historical Society of Southwest Virginia, publication No. 7, July, 1973.

Jessee Historic Foundation, Inc. “Jessee’s Mill, Application for Historic Marker,” 2002. Virginia Department of Historic Resources Archives, Richmond, Virginia.

Larkin, David. *Mill: The History and Future of Naturally Powered Buildings*. 2000.

MaCaulay, David. *Mill*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1983.

Russell County Circuit Court, Lebanon, Virginia.  
Will Book 3.

Russell County Heritage Book Committee. *The Heritage of Russell County, Virginia, 1786–1986*. Vol. 1. Wolsworth Publishing.

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Tyrwhitt, Janice, William Fox, and Bill Brooks. *The Mill*, New York Graphic Society, 1976.

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Population 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880.  
Agriculture 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880.

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**Section 10 Page 7**

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**Boundary Description**

The nominated parcel consists only of that portion of Russell County tax parcel 767 that lies west of Rt. 645. The parcel is bounded on the west by Rt. 640; on the north by tax parcels 763 and 763A2; on the south by tax parcel 740B, and on the west by Rt. 645.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated parcel boundary includes the mill, mill dam, waterfall, and timber frame barn, all of which are historic components of the site.

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**Section photo Page 8**

All photographs are of:

Jessees Mill Property and historically associated resources  
Russell County, Virginia

Date: August 2004      Photographer: Michael J. Pulice

Negative #: 21792

Location of negatives: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond

1. VIEW OF: Jessees Mill, facing SW. Frame #11.
2. VIEW OF: Jessees Mill, north elevation. Frame #5.
3. VIEW OF: Jessees Mill, west elevation. Frame #2.
4. VIEW OF: Jessees Mill, SE corner. Frame #17.
5. VIEW OF: Jessees Mill, waterwheel, east elevation. Frame #15.
6. VIEW OF: Jessees Mill, waterwheel and waterfall. Frame #6.
7. VIEW OF: Jessees Mill, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor machinery. Frame #26.
8. VIEW OF: Jessees Mill waterfall, facing south. Frame #14.
9. VIEW OF: Jessees Mill dam, facing east. Frame #30.
10. VIEW OF: Jessees Mill barn, facing NE. Frame # 3.
11. VIEW OF: Jessees Mill barn rear (north) elevation. Frame #24.
12. VIEW OF: Jessees Mill barn, interior, as seen from south end of structure. Frame #10.
13. VIEW OF: Jessees Mill schoolhouse, front, as seen from Rt. 640. Frame #35.
14. VIEW OF: Jessees Mill schoolhouse, rear, creekside, as seen from Rt. 645. Frame #37.
15. VIEW OF: Andrew Jackson Jessee House as seen from Rt. 645. Frame #23.